

word. And we will honor our word to the people of Iraq and those in the Middle East who yearn for freedom. Murderers will not determine the future of Iraq, and they will not determine the future of the Middle East.

In Jerusalem as in Baghdad, terrorists are trying to undermine the hopes of peace with acts of violence. Their desperation also grows as the parties move closer to a just settlement. But terrorists do not speak for the Palestinian people. They do not serve the Palestinian cause. And a Palestinian state will never be built on the foundation of violence.

Now is the time for every true friend of the Palestinian people, every leader in the Middle East, and the Palestinian people themselves to cut off all money and support for terrorists and actively fight terror on all fronts. Only then can Israel be secure and the flag rise over an independent Palestine. And to bring that day closer, America will be a consistent friend of all who work for peace.

For nearly 2 years, on many fronts, the United States and our friends have conducted a global campaign against terror. We met the enemy on desert sands and mountain passes, wherever they choose to gather and fight. We've had successes, yet our mission continues. The stakes could not be greater for the American people. All of us who have taken an oath to defend this Nation will do our duty.

Our military forces in the war on terror are showing the definition of "duty." In hostile conditions and remote parts of the earth, brave Americans are sacrificing for freedom and the security of others. Some have been wounded, and some have been killed. The veterans in this hall understand the loss and sadness that have come to military families. This Nation is grateful to every man and woman who serves, and we honor the memory of all who have fallen.

We also remember what this fight is about. Our military is confronting terrorists in Iraq and Afghanistan and in other places so our people will not have to confront terrorist violence in New York or St. Louis or Los Angeles. Our Armed Forces are doing the work they are called to do. They're taking the fight to the enemy so that America and our friends can live in peace.

The war on terror is a test of our strength. It is a test of our perseverance, our patience, and our will. This Nation has been tested before. By the character of men and women like you, we've come through every trial. And so it is today. Our course is set. Our purpose is firm. No act of terrorists will weaken our resolve or alter their fate. Our only goal, our only option, is total victory in the war on terror. And this Nation will press on to victory.

Thank you for having me. May God bless you, and may God continue to bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3 p.m. at the St. Louis Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to Nurjaman Riduan Isamuddin (known as Hambali), Al Qaida's chief operational planner in Southeast Asia; Khalid Sheik Mohammed, senior Al Qaida leader responsible for planning the September 11 attack, who was captured in Pakistan on March 1; former President Saddam Hussein and former Vice President Taha Yasin Ramadan of Iraq; former Iraqi Ba'ath Party official Ali Hassan al-Majid (known as "Chemical Ali"); and L. Paul Bremer III, Presidential Envoy to Iraq. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

### **Statement on the Report of the Columbia Accident Investigation Board**

*August 26, 2003*

Today the Columbia Accident Investigation Board released its report on the tragic accident that claimed the lives of seven brave astronauts. These men and women assumed great risk in service to all humanity. On behalf of a grateful Nation, I once again recognize their sacrifices and those of their loved ones. Their service will never be forgotten.

Our Nation also owes its appreciation to Admiral Harold Gehman, Jr. (retired) as well as the other 12 members of the Columbia Accident Investigation Board. As Board Chair, Admiral Gehman and his team have worked tirelessly over the past seven months conducting an exhaustive review of the circumstances surrounding this accident. The next steps for NASA under Sean O'Keefe's leadership must be determined after a thorough review of the entire report, including its recommendations.

Our journey into space will go on. The work of the crew of the *Columbia* and the heroic explorers who traveled before them will continue.

**Proclamation 7695—Women's Equality Day, 2003**

*August 26, 2003*

*By the President of the United States of America*

**A Proclamation**

The 19th Amendment to the Constitution, ratified on August 26, 1920, guaranteed the right to vote for American women. Women's Equality Day commemorates this constitutional amendment and is an opportunity for citizens across our country to honor those who took part in the long and difficult struggle for women's suffrage, as well those since 1920 who have continued to fight for equal rights for women.

Beginning with the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848, women's suffrage supporters lectured, wrote, marched, and lobbied for enfranchisement of American women. Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Lucretia Mott led this movement and advocated an amendment to the Constitution that would guarantee women the right to vote. Through their vision and dedication, these women advanced the fight for equal rights.

Today, American women are making a difference in their communities and workplaces. Women's accomplishments in education, business, science, art, medicine, athletics, and every other field have made America better and stronger. The courage and determination of American women are exemplified in the personnel serving in our Armed Forces. Women across America are also helping to secure our country by serving as police officers, firefighters, doctors, nurses, paramedics, and first-responders.

Americans believe in opportunity for all and on this day, we honor the achievements of women who have charted the path to equal opportunity.

**Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush,** President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by

the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim August 26, 2003, as Women's Equality Day. I call upon the people of the United States to observe this day with appropriate programs and activities.

**In Witness Whereof,** I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-sixth day of August, in the year of our Lord two thousand three, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-eighth.

**George W. Bush**

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., August 27, 2003]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on August 28.

**Remarks at a Dinner for Senator Christopher S. "Kit" Bond of Missouri in St. Louis**

*August 26, 2003*

Thanks for the warm welcome. It's such an honor to be here in the great State of Missouri. I am here because I believe Kit Bond is the right man for the United States Senate.

And I want to thank you for his—for your strong support for this fine Senator. Looks like you've got a few friends here in Missouri, Senator. [*Laughter*] Actually, I wasn't his first choice to come tonight. [*Laughter*] Laura is stuck on the ranch. [*Laughter*] But she sends her very best to Kit and to Linda.

Just as a kind of step back, I am really fortunate that Laura Bush said yes when I asked her to marry me. She is a great First Lady and a fabulous wife. I appreciate—you know, Senator Bond and I both married above ourselves. [*Laughter*] And it's great to see Linda. She's done a lot for him. She shortened his speeches and shortened his waistline. [*Laughter*] He's getting in fighting form for the '04 elections.

I'm also honored to be here with former Senator Jack Danforth. What a distinguished citizen of your State he is. He's working hard to bring peace to the Sudan. It's about as tough as an assignment as somebody can be given. But because of his steady demeanor and patience and his faith in freedom and peace, I think we'll achieve peace in the